



CA Children's Administration

Report to the Legislature

Children's Services Annual Quality Assurance Report, Fiscal Year 2010

July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010

Child Welfare Services
RCW 43.20A.870 and RCW 74.13.031(5)

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Executive Summary

Safe, healthy individuals, families and communities

The Department of Social and Health Services and all of its representative service administrations subscribe to one mission, one vision, and one core set of values. The Department's vision is, "safe, healthy individuals, families and communities."

The Children's Administration, in alignment with that greater vision, is charged with providing or overseeing the provision of all aspects of services and supports within the child welfare continuum.

Overarching roles and responsibilities of the Children's Administration include:

- Responding to and investigating reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.
- Providing or overseeing the provision of child and family services and supports to help parents safely care for their own children whenever possible.
- Securing safe and stable temporary placements for children until children may safely be returned home or placed into an alternative safe and stable permanent home.
- Overseeing the provision of medical, educational, and mental health services to children in out-of-home care.
- Licensing and monitoring temporary placement foster family and relative homes as well as congregate care or therapeutic facilities to care for children.
- Providing services and supports to older youth transitioning out of foster care into responsible independent living.

The Children's Administration Annual Quality Services Report is a legislatively required annual review of the Children's Administration's efforts to enhance child safety and permanency and support child and family well-being.

While the Administration continually tracks performance in all areas of service delivery and oversight in an effort to improve outcomes, this report addresses only a select number of measures as required by statute.

The Administration maintains accountability not only to the legislature but to the general public for efforts toward continuous quality improvement in the child welfare system while recognizing that no government entity alone can ensure the safety of children.

The Children's Administration relies on community-based service providers, child serving agencies, faith communities, schools, and caring individuals to speak up on behalf of vulnerable children, by reporting suspected child maltreatment.

The Administration responds to numerous external mandates and implements internal assessments and practice improvement initiatives to continually better our quality of service to children and families.

This report, the 14th **Children's Services Annual Quality Assurance Report**, details performance outcome data in compliance with RCW 43.20A.870 and RCW 74.13.031(5), in order to demonstrate progress in the following specific service areas:

Child Protective Services (CPS) response time

The Administration responds quickly to allegations of abuse or neglect and implements safeguards to protect children who have been abused or neglected from further abuse or neglect at the hands of their caregivers.

Children's health and safety in out-of-home care

The Administration monitors children in out-of-home care, performs health and safety checks on licensed facilities, and works to provide safe placements to children who have been removed from their families due to abuse or neglect so they are not abused or neglected in licensed care.

Adherence to permanency planning guidelines

The Administration works toward placing children in permanent homes as quickly as possible and tracks progress with reference to reunification within 12 months and adoption within 24 months.

Children's length of stay in out-of-home placement

The Administration seeks to limit the amount of time children spend in out-of-home care prior to reunification or other permanency plan completion.

In accordance with federal mandate, the Administration procured and implemented a new Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), named FamLink. FamLink launched in February 2009 and has undergone subsequent system upgrades. FamLink is designed to serve as an integrated case management tool with increasingly comprehensive data management functions.

Under leadership of Secretary Susan N. Dreyfus, Children's Administration, like all other DSHS entities, has worked to improve methods for measuring and improving performance.

The data in this report has undergone substantial changes when compared to statistics reported in previous documents. The transition to FamLink, changes in federal reporting requirements, and efforts to enhance data fidelity have resulted in different calculation methods resulting in sometimes substantially different data than in previous reports. In some cases, measures have been recalculated to exhibit trends over time utilizing consistent calculation methods.

The data in this report comes from multiple sources including: the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Executive Management Information System, the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, and the State Automated Child Welfare Information System called FamLink. Measures are reported by Federal Fiscal Year, October 1, 2009 until September 30, 2010 if required by the federal Administration for Children and Families and by state fiscal year, July 1, 2009 until June 30, 2010 for other legislatively required measures. The reporting period is noted for each measure.

Performance Measures in this report

In addition to monitoring performance in compliance with federal performance requirements, and responding to other legislative and judicial mandates for outcome measurement, the Administration continues to refine methods for assessing performance and improving outcomes for children and families.

The following measures are included in this report:

- **Timely Response in Emergent Referrals**
During the last quarter of State Fiscal Year 2010, social workers visited 98.3 percent of children who were the subjects of emergent referrals within 24 hours of intake, exceeding the 95 percent target.
- **Timely Response in Non-emergent Referrals**
During the last quarter of State Fiscal Year 2010, social workers visited 97.6 percent of children who were the subjects of non-emergent referrals within 72 hours of the department receiving the intake, exceeding the 95 percent target.
- **Children Who Did not Experience Additional Abuse**
In Federal Fiscal Year 2010, 93.7 percent of children who had been the victims of founded allegations of abuse or neglect were protected from any additional incidences of abuse or neglect in the six months following the initial finding. The federal standard for this measure is 94.6 percent.
- **Children who are free from abuse or neglect while in out-of-home care**
In Federal Fiscal Year 2010, 99.80 percent of children placed into out-of-home care were protected from abuse or neglect in their temporary placement setting, exceeding the 99.68 percent federal standard.
- **Foster homes receiving health and safety checks**
In State Fiscal Year 2010, 15.3 percent of foster homes received random health and safety checks exceeding the 10 percent standard required by state legislature.
- **Children visited every month by their social worker**
In June 2010, 95.6 percent of children received visits from their social workers every month exceeding the 95 percent standard.
- **Children reunified within 12 months of placement**
In Federal Fiscal Year 2010, 72.3 percent of children were reunified with their families within 12 months of removal. This outcome does not meet the federal standard of 76.2 percent; however it shows an improvement over the past three years.
- **Children adopted within 24 months of placement**
In Federal Fiscal Year 2010, 24.2 percent of children placed into out-of-home care for whom return home was not a safe option, were adopted within 24 months of placement.
- **Length of stay for children in care**
In State Fiscal Year 2010, 38.8 percent of children in care remained in care for longer than two years and the median length of stay for children during the same period was 573 days.
- **Children reentering care**
In State Fiscal Year 2010, 11.0 percent of children who had been previously removed from their families and were returned home during State Fiscal Year 2009, came back into care within 12 months of reunification.

- **Children placed with relatives**

In State Fiscal Year 2010, 37.2 percent of children who required placement into out-of-home care were placed with relatives.

Summary Status of Selected Activities

The Administration continues to respond to legislative and judicial mandates designed to protect vulnerable children while working internally to identify and implement evidence-based practices for children and families. In this most recent reporting period, major efforts went into addressing the goals established in a variety of performance improvement initiatives including: **Child and Family Services Review (CFSR)**, The **Braam Settlement Agreement**, and the **Governor's Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP)** program.

Children's Administration recognizes the need for improved statewide consistency in child welfare practices. In 2007, agency personnel and key stakeholders throughout the state organized to thoroughly research and adopt a statewide **Practice Model**. This new model, already shown to improve outcomes, is currently implemented throughout the state and continues to undergo enhancement to benefit families served by the public child welfare system.

In addition, in an effort to provide an integrated information management system, the Administration continues to enhance Famlink, the **Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS)**.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), a federal review of state child welfare systems, has seven (7) outcome categories related to the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families, and seven (7) categories related to systemic factors. The CFSR also has six (6) data indicators with national performance standards.

In February 2004 the CFSR review determined that Washington State did not meet substantial conformity for any of the seven (7) outcome categories related to safety, permanence and well-being of children, and failed to do so in four (4) of the seven categories related to systemic factors.

In the two years following the CFSR, the Administration successfully completed a Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

CFSR II

The second round of federal Child and Family Services reviews took place between 2007 and 2010, with Washington state being the last state to have an on-site review. A team of professionals from the Children's Administration, in partnership with court representatives, foster parents, birth parents, foster care alumni, Tribal representatives, and private agency staff worked collaboratively to complete and submit our statewide assessment in July 2010.

Washington state's on-site review was held the week of September 13-17, 2010. During the on-site review, federal and state teams reviewed 65 cases of children and families involved in the state's child welfare system, in 4 offices in King, Whatcom, and Spokane counties. Stakeholders including families, youth, providers, judges, Tribes and advocates were interviewed at the state and local level. The on-site review culminated September 17, 2010, with an exit conference discussing preliminary performance findings.

Future reports will discuss findings from that federal review and program improvement initiatives that result.

Braam Settlement Agreement

The Braam Oversight Panel was created in 2004 to oversee a Settlement regarding Washington State's foster care system. The Settlement was reached after a six-year period of litigation. The named Plaintiff, Jessica Braam, is an adult who lived in 34 foster homes by the time the suit was filed in 1998. The Settlement is intended to improve the conditions and treatment of children in the custody of the state's Division of Children and Family Services.

A Panel was created to monitor improvements in selected services and ensure quality standards are met during the seven year duration of the settlement. This independent Panel was mutually selected by the parties (the Plaintiffs who filed the lawsuit and the state of Washington). The Panel, working in collaboration with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and with substantial input from the Plaintiffs and other stakeholders, issued an Implementation Plan for the six areas specified in the Settlement in February 2006. In July 2008, a Revised Braam Implementation Plan was published to reflect clarifications and modifications based on developments in the Braam process and discussions with DSHS, the plaintiffs and stakeholders.

Performance has improved in the following areas:

- Completion of Initial Health Screens. Staff members are doing excellent work completing CHETs, and Shared Planning Meetings that include a focus on CHET Screen results.
- Implementation of strategies to reduce racial disproportionality and outcome disparity in the child welfare system presents an excellent opportunity for research on what strategies are having an impact.
- Completion and documentation of monthly social worker visits during the calendar month.
- Improvement in completing youth transition (exit) staffings.
- Increased safeguards for Physically Assaultive/Aggressive Youth
- Increase in sibling visits and contacts.

Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP)

Between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010, the Children's Administration prepared four GMAP reports for the Governor.

The GMAP forum process provides an opportunity for Children's Administration to discuss performance measures and workload data directly with the Governor. These reports address areas in which the agency is doing well, making progress, or needs to improve performance, and where additional resources are needed in order to best serve Washington's vulnerable children and their families.

In each of the four GMAP reports presented in Fiscal Year 2010, the Children's Administration demonstrated marked progress in the child safety measures. By the end of Calendar year 2010, Children's Administration had met or exceeded all targets established by GMAP. The first 2010 GMAP presentation featured data on only two of the four safety measures as FamLink data transitions remained in process.

The Government Management Accountability and Performance Enhances government transparency and fosters accountability in all state agencies. Governor Gregoire and a panel of advisors ask challenging questions, make recommendations about how to improve outcomes, and may allocate resources where necessary.

The contents of the Administration's presentations are available on the Governor's GMAP website: <http://www.accountability.wa.gov/>

Practice Model

In 2007, the Children's Administration adopted Solution-Based Casework as the Administration's system-wide child welfare practice model. The implementation of that practice model was the direct result of diligent planning, coordination, and hard work on the part of many dedicated staff and stakeholders.

Children's Administration has been fully committed to ensuring that Solution-Based Casework is embedded into our practice to better assess and plan for child safety.

Some Practice Model Accomplishments Include:

- Trained Children's Administration staff, Assistant Attorneys General, Court staff, and Tribal staff.
- Appointed 125 Practice Model Consultants statewide.
- Implementation of the Information Technology components of the Practice Model for FamLink.
- Developed quality assurance plans for each regional office.
- Developed strategic plan to ensure all units have had at least three Practice Model Coach lead case consultations. Completed August 2010.

The Practice Model will continue to be fully integrated into all aspects of day-to-day service delivery through training, technical assistance, and quality assurance efforts.

Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS)

FamLink is one of the most important tools in supporting quality practice and consistency of service to children and families in Washington State. In addition, it provides greater social worker access to critical safety information and enhances the Administration's fiscal roles in provider payment.

Since FamLink was officially implemented in February 2009, continued improvements have been made to support the work of social workers and to meet CA business needs, in addition to meeting State, Federal, and other Stakeholder Requirements.

During this reporting period, several enhancements have been made to the FamLink system to continue to support CA. Some of the more major enhancements include:

- The addition of the National Youth Transition Database (NYTD), new federal legislation that required the addition of new tools in the FamLink system allowing us to report to the Federal Government services that are being provided to our youth as they transition out of care into adulthood.
- Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) design and development were completed during this reporting period.
- Budget related functionality was added to FamLink to assist CA with Budget forecasting and data inquiries, in addition to using the FamLink system to track expenditures.
- A new Contracts page was added to FamLink which allows the FamLink users to record contract information in FamLink.
- Expungement of records. Design and development was completed to address legislative changes in criteria for the expungement of records regarding allegations of abuse and neglect and work related to those allegations within specified timeframes under the RCW.

In addition to these major modifications and enhancements to the FamLink system during this timeframe, there were also several other changes completed and implemented to support practice, financials, and performance. Some of these additions include:

- Tribal Access to FamLink to allow our tribal partners secured access to information regarding their tribal members.
- Enhancements to Search Functionality in FamLink to allow users to search specific intakes directly in the system.
- The Random Moment Time Sample (RMTS) module provides functionality for the recording and reporting of random moment time sample data in FamLink.
- Case Assignment Notification. Letters can now be generated out of the FamLink system to notify caregivers and case participants when there has been a change in worker assignment on a case and provide the new assigned worker's contact information.
- Case Sampling Functionality which allows the Statewide Case Review Team to receive random sampling of cases meeting identified criteria in order to meet Federal requirements for case review.

With sound business structures; creative and flexible staff; leadership foresight and engagement; Children's Administration will continue the successful maintenance and operation of FamLink as well as implement enhancements and new functionality necessary to meet business needs and support both federal and state mandates.

Safety

Goal: Children will be safe from abuse and neglect

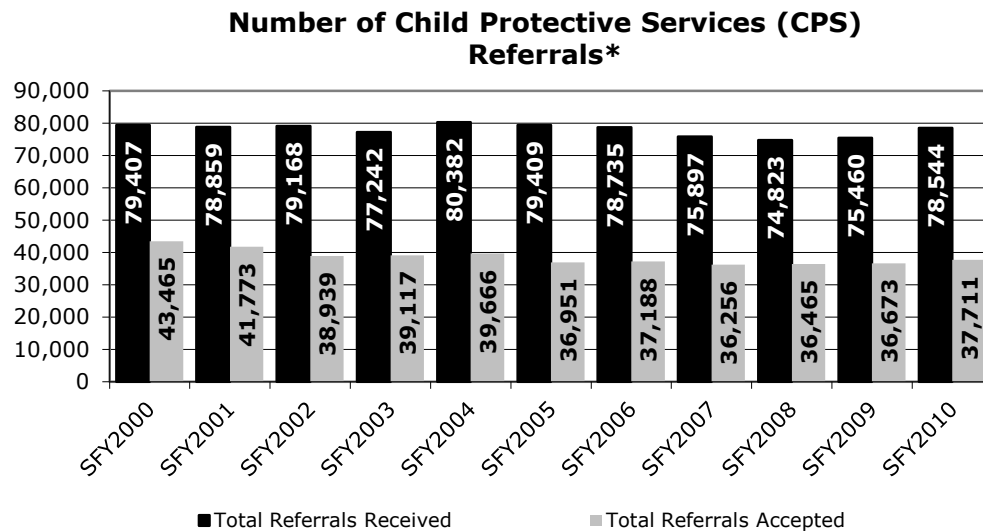
Children's Administration implements and oversees practices and programs designed to help keep children safe and families intact.

Although the Administration has the primary legal responsibility for intervening in cases of child abuse or neglect, it is a shared responsibility with communities to protect children; including attentive childcare providers, watchful neighbors, loving grandparents, medical professionals, school personnel and others who have a moral, ethical, and often legal responsibility to intervene on behalf of a child who may be in harm's way.

The first step in the child welfare process is a telephone call or other method of notification that a child is possibly being harmed by a caregiver or that the child's basic needs are not being met. That initial report is called a "referral."

Child Protective Services (CPS) Referrals*

In State Fiscal Year 2010, the Administration received 78,544 referrals alleging child abuse or neglect. Of those, 37,711 referrals were accepted for investigation as meeting the legal criteria for abuse or neglect.



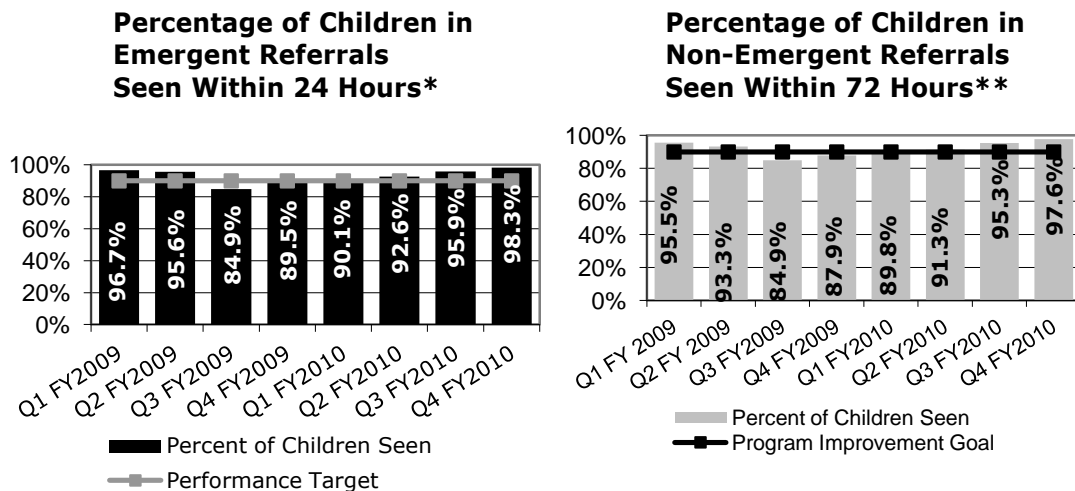
* Number of referrals received per fiscal year. Includes Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) Child Protective Services referrals. Source: EMIS report.

Objective: Initiate timely investigations
Measured by: Children seen face-to-face by a social worker following a referral accepted for investigation

Any time a referral is made regarding the suspected abuse or neglect of a child, the receiving social worker must make a determination about the best course of action in responding to the allegation based upon the information provided. Not only must there be indicators that some type of abuse or neglect has occurred, there must be adequate information to allow investigators to identify and locate the child or children concerned within prescribed timeframes.

Referrals in which a child is determined to be at moderate or high risk of harm are accepted for investigation by Child Protective Services (CPS) staff. Whenever a child or group of children meets the legal criteria for being at "imminent risk" of harm, an investigating social worker must initiate the investigation within 24 hours of receipt of the referral. In cases where children are found to be at moderate or high risk, social workers must make face-to-face contact within 72 hours.

As of the 4th quarter of Federal Fiscal Year 2010, 98.3 percent of children in emergent referrals were seen within 24 hours and 97.6 percent of children in non-emergent referrals were seen within 72 hours.



* Percent of children in emergent referrals seen or attempted within 24 hours. Excludes Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) CPS referrals. The federal Program Improvement Plan goal was 90 percent by September 2006. Source: FamLink data October 2010.

** Percent of children in non-emergent referrals seen or attempted within 72 hours. Excludes Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) CPS referrals. The federal Program Improvement Plan goal was 90 percent by September 2006. Source: FamLink data October 2010.

Objective: Reduce recurrence of abuse or neglect
Measured by: Children who do not experience re-abuse

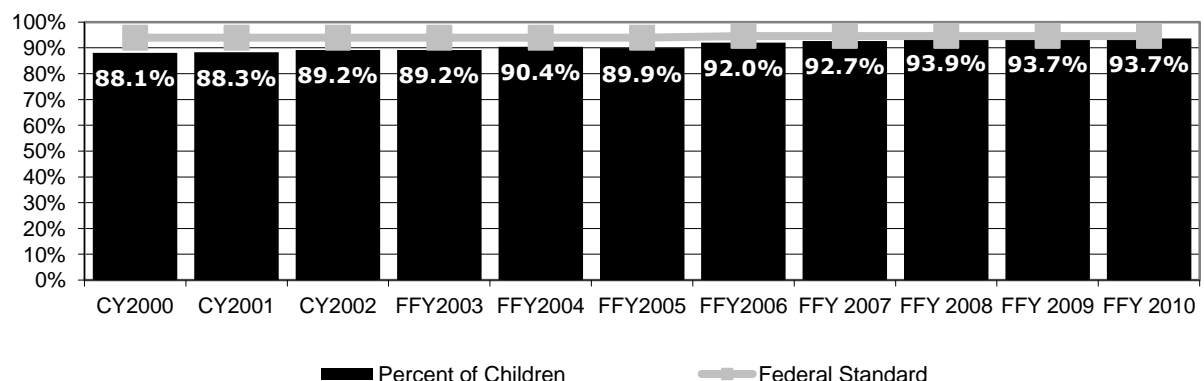
A child is considered the victim of re-abuse when he or she has experienced a founded allegation of abuse or neglect within six months of a previous finding of abuse or neglect.

The federal standard requires that, at a minimum, 94.6 percent of children who have been the victims of abuse or neglect will be protected from any additional founded allegations of abuse or neglect.

This standard is necessarily stringent and like the federal entities who have established this performance target, the Administration believes that no child should experience re-abuse at the hands of a caregiver. Toward that goal, the Administration has worked to implement interventions designed to further reduce incidents of re-abuse including safety plans and implementing a variety of family supports. 93.7 percent of Washington children, who had been abused in Federal Fiscal Year 2009, were protected from additional abuse in Federal Fiscal Year 2010.

Safety is at the forefront of every aspect of our work; we anticipate continued improvement regarding this measure as the Administration implements an enhanced child safety framework designed to maintain child safety at every point in a child's involvement with the public child welfare system.

Percentage of Children Who Did Not Experience Re-Abuse*



* Percent of children with a founded referral of abuse or neglect who were free from an additional founded referral of abuse or neglect within six months of the initial referral. "Founded" means that an investigation concluded that the maltreatment was more likely than not to have occurred. For referrals with multiple allegations, the referral is considered founded if any of the allegations are founded. The federal standard is 94.6 percent or more children will be free from additional founded allegations of abuse. In 2002, the federal government changed the required reporting period from calendar year to federal fiscal year. In 2007, the federal government required that states report the percent of children **free from** additional founded allegations of abuse rather than those who were re-abused. Source: Washington Child and Family Services Review Data Profile, November 4, 2011.

Objective: Improve safety for children placed in out-of-home care

Measured by: Children who are free from abuse or neglect in out-of-home care

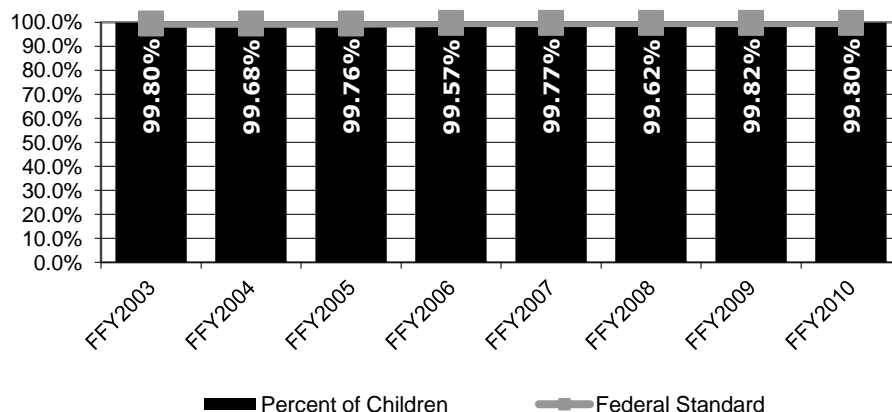
The Children's Administration works diligently to ensure that homes licensed to provide care for foster children are safe and stable. Those homes or facilities must meet strict licensing standards to ensure that the structures and surrounding grounds are safe for children.

In addition, those responsible for caring for children must undergo background checks, participate in education and training, and demonstrate competency in a variety of skills associated with providing care for and nurturing vulnerable children. The Administration takes great care to ensure that children who have already experienced caregiver abuse or neglect are safe in licensed care.

During Federal Fiscal Year 2010, 99.80 percent of children were safe from abuse or neglect while in out-of-home care, exceeding the standard of 99.68 percent.

While the administration exceeds federal expectations for this measure, ongoing efforts are underway to ensure that no child experiences harm in state licensed family foster homes or facilities.

Percentage of Children Free From Abuse or Neglect While in Out-of-Home Care*



* Percent of children in out-of-home care without a founded referral of abuse or neglect. The new federal standard is 99.68 percent or more. Source: Washington Child and Family Services Review Data Profile, November 4, 2011

Objective: Improve safety for children placed in out-of-home care

Measured by: Foster homes receiving health and safety checks

Washington state statute requires that "Monitoring shall be done by the Department on a random sample basis of no less than ten percent of the total licensed family foster homes licensed by the Administration on July 1 of each year," and reported annually. (RCW 74.13.260; RCW 74.13.031(5))

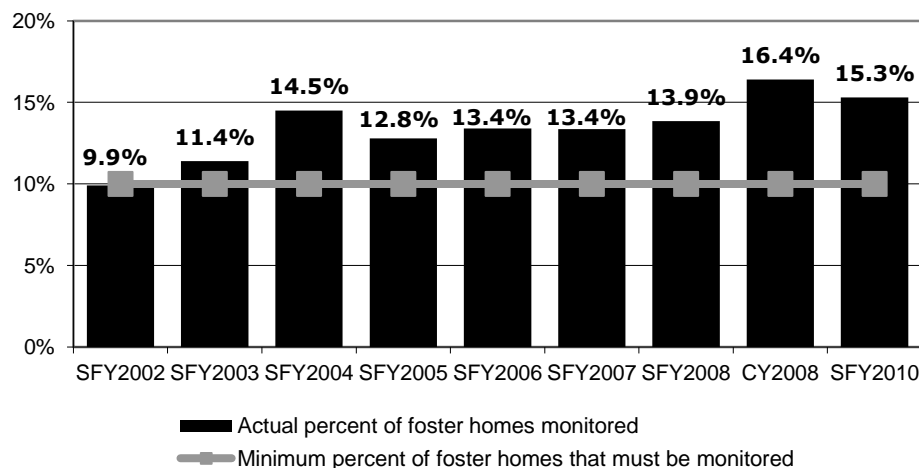
In State Fiscal Year 2010, 15.3 percent of licensed homes received a health and safety check, far exceeding the standard.

Foster parents must meet licensing standards and so must the physical structures in which children are placed.

Fireplaces or wood stoves must be entirely surrounded by safety fences. Two-story houses are required to demonstrate safe methods of exit in case of fire. Medications are locked, first aid kits are well-stocked, and foster parents must be trained in First Aid, CPR and safe response to Blood-borne Pathogens.

Licensors thoroughly inspect and evaluate the condition of homes and facilities to make sure that no health or safety hazards have arisen since a license was issued or since a previous health and safety check.

Percentage of Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) Foster Homes Monitored Annually*



* Percentage of Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) foster homes with a health and safety check completed by the Division of Licensed Resources annually. FamLink data, State Fiscal Year 2010.

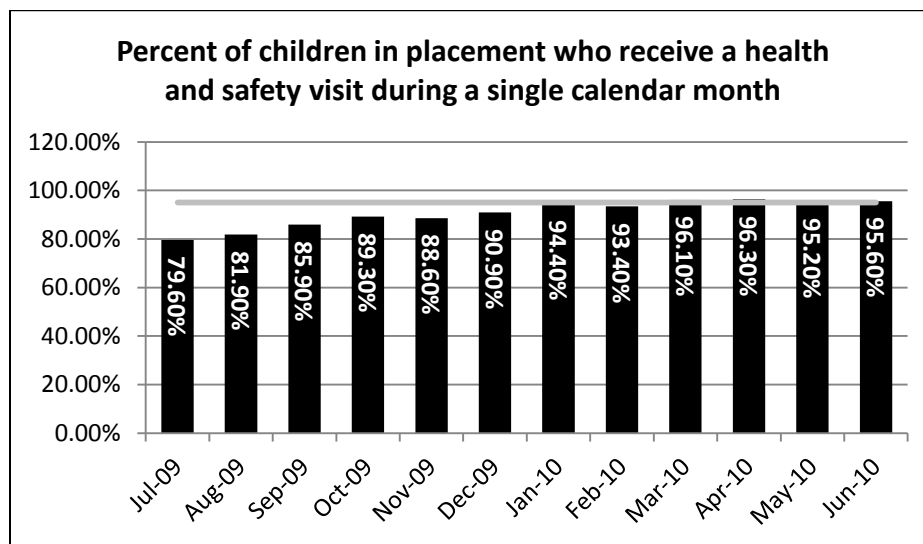
Objective: Increase worker visits with children
Measured by: Children visited every month by their social worker

In order to monitor the health and safety of children in out-of-home care, social workers must make contact with children on a monthly basis.

Social workers are required to visit children in person, in their out-of-home placements at least once a month not to exceed 40 days between visits. These visits allow the social worker to visually assess a child's health and well-being, evaluate the child's physical surroundings and examine the child's adjustment to his or her placement to determine whether or not the placement is meeting the child's needs. In addition, social workers interact with children on their caseloads through telephone contact and attendance at meetings and appointments related to a child's case.

The target for this measure requires that 95 percent of children in out-of-home care will receive face-to-face social worker visits monthly.

The Administration has demonstrated significant progress with reference to this measure, improving from 79.6 percent in July 2009 to maintaining percentages above 95 percent throughout the last quarter of State Fiscal Year 2010.



* Source: FamLink run October, 2010.

Permanency

Goal: Provide safe, permanent placements as quickly as possible for children who are placed into out-of-home care

Objective: Increase permanency for children in out-of-home care

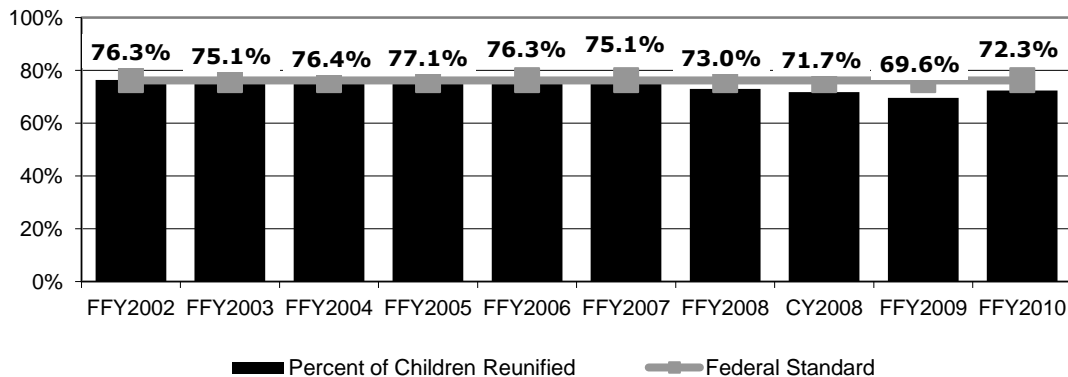
Measured by: Children reunified within 12 months of placement

Whenever it is safe and in the best interest of the child, the Administration works to reunify children with their families of origin, following a safety assessment and thorough reunification planning.

The federal standard requires that at least 76.2 percent of children for whom reunification is the best permanent outcome, will be reunified within 12 months of out-of-home placement.

In Federal Fiscal Year 2010, 72.3 percent of children who had been removed from their parents due to abuse or neglect during Federal Fiscal Year 2009 were able to safely return home.

Percentage of Children Reunified Within 12 Months of Placement*



* Percent of children reunified with their parents within 12 months of placement into out-of-home care. The federal standard is 76.2 percent or higher. Source: Washington Child and Family Services Review Data Profile, November 4, 2011

Objective: Increase permanency for children in out-of-home care

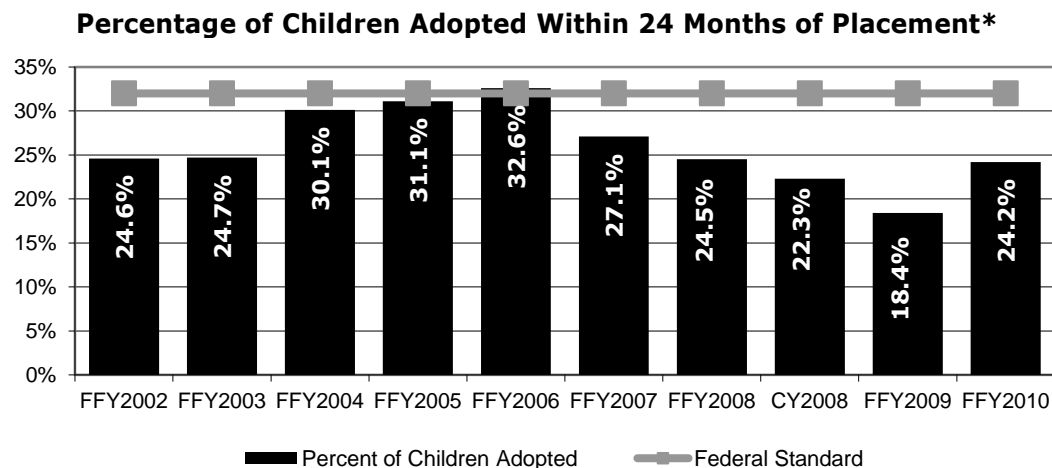
Measured by: Children adopted within 24 months of placement

When children enter the foster care system as the result of caregiver abuse or neglect, Children's Administration begins working with families and community-based service providers to support caregivers in safely parenting their children. In alignment with federal requirements, the Administration simultaneously engages in a process of concurrent planning to find an alternative permanent home should reunification efforts fail.

The goal of concurrent planning is to prevent children from languishing in temporary foster care by making diligent efforts to secure safety and permanency regardless of whether a child returns home.

Children who enter state care after the age of five, children of color, sibling groups, and children with special physical, mental, or behavioral needs tend to stay in foster care longer than very young, healthy children.

The federal standard is that 32 percent of children in care will be adopted within 24 months of placement. In Federal Fiscal Year 2010, 24.2 percent of children in Washington state care were adopted within 24 months.



* Percent of children adopted within 24 months of placement into out-of-home care. The federal standard is 32 percent or higher. Source: Washington Child and Family Services Review Data Profile, November 4, 2011

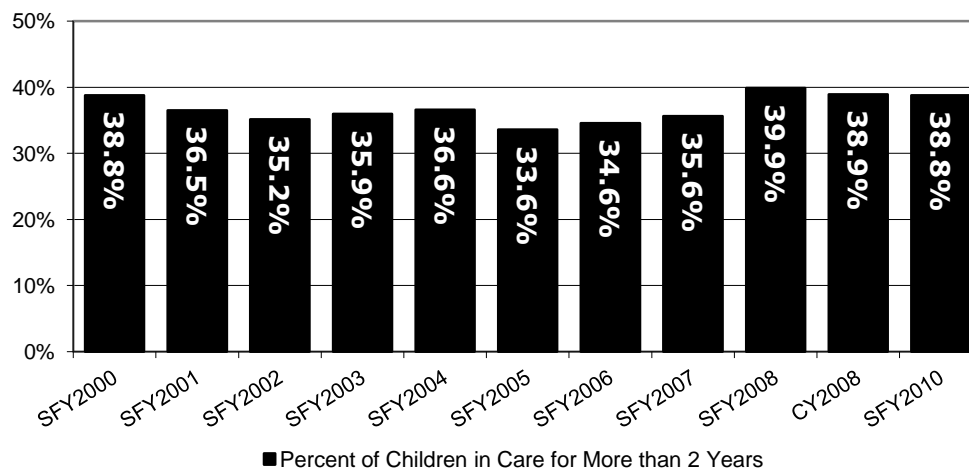
Objective: Decrease length of stay without increasing reentry

Measured by: Length of stay for children in care

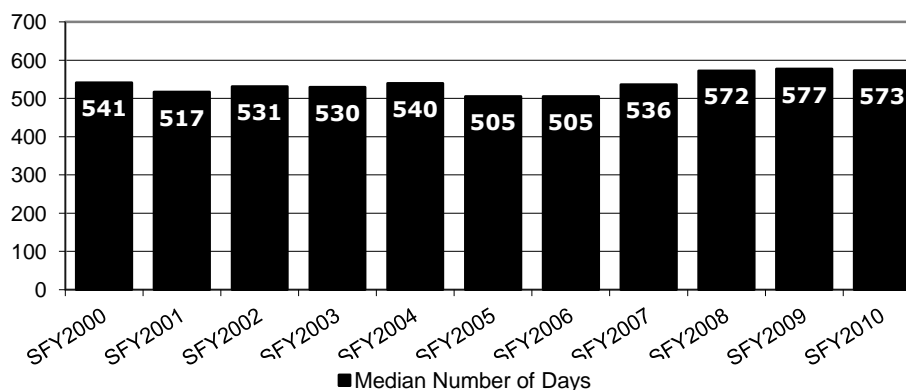
Whenever children must be placed into out-of-home care to provide for their safety, every effort is made to ensure that their temporary placement is stable and that a permanent home is secured as quickly as possible.

The percent of children who have been in care longer than two years has remained consistent over the past three years with 38.8 percent of children remaining in out-of-home care for longer than two years in State Fiscal Year 2010. Similarly the median number of days children spend in out-of-home care has shown little variation during the same period with children spending an average of 573 days in out of home care.

Percentage of Children in Care for More Than 2 Years*



Median Number of Days Children are Placed in Care**



*Percent of children in the Administration's custody in out-of-home care for more than 60 days, who have a cumulative time in care during their current placement episode of more than two years. Source: FamLink

**Median cumulative time in care for all children in care for more than 60 days. This measure is based upon the population of children in care for more than 60 days. Source: FamLink

Objective: Decrease length-of-stay without increasing reentry

Measured by: Children reentering care

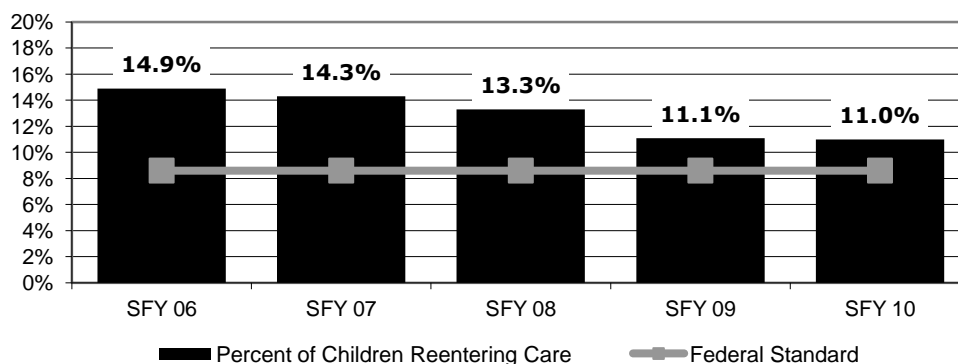
Children's Administration strives to safely maintain children in their own homes whenever possible through community-based resources and supports. However, children cannot always be safely cared for by their own families.

The decision to remove a child from their home and family is not one that is taken lightly and the Administration does not act alone in such cases. Child Protective Services (CPS) makes recommendations to the courts that a child would likely be safer in the home of a substitute caregiver than in their own home. Courts, not CPS, have the ultimate authority to remove children from their parents.

Likewise, the decision to return children to the homes from which they have been removed is serious and much effort must go into assessing a family's readiness for a child to return home. The Administration implements safety strategies and family supports designed to keep children safe so they will not need to come back into state care following reunification with their families.

The federal standard requires that no more than 8.6 percent of children who have been returned home will come back into care for reasons of abuse or neglect. For children that were reunified in State Fiscal Year 2009, 11.0 percent experienced reentry in State Fiscal Year 2010. The Administration has demonstrated the lowest rate of re-entry on record for the past two consecutive years.

Percentage of Children Reentering Care within 12 Months of Reunification*



* Results from FAMLINK data warehouse extraction on October 18, 2010. Placement Re-Entry: New Federal rules (as of CFSR Round 2) for selection of the placement re-entry cohorts and definition of the measure have been applied. First, exit cohorts of all children reunified in the fiscal year are identified. A child is not considered reunified until they have been formally discharged (legal dependency dismissed). If a child re-enters out of home care before formal discharge and within the first six months of their trial return home period, they are not counted as a placement re-entry. If their trial return home period exceeds six months and they subsequently return to care prior to formal discharge, they are counted as a placement re-entry. Children not in DCFS custody or reunified in less than 8 days after placement entry are excluded from the measure.

Objective: Increase relative placements
Measured by: Children placed with relatives

Family continuity is vital to any child's sense of well-being. For children who cannot remain safely in their own homes, the experience of living with other family members is often preferable to placement with unknown caregivers for a child's immediate and long-term well-being.

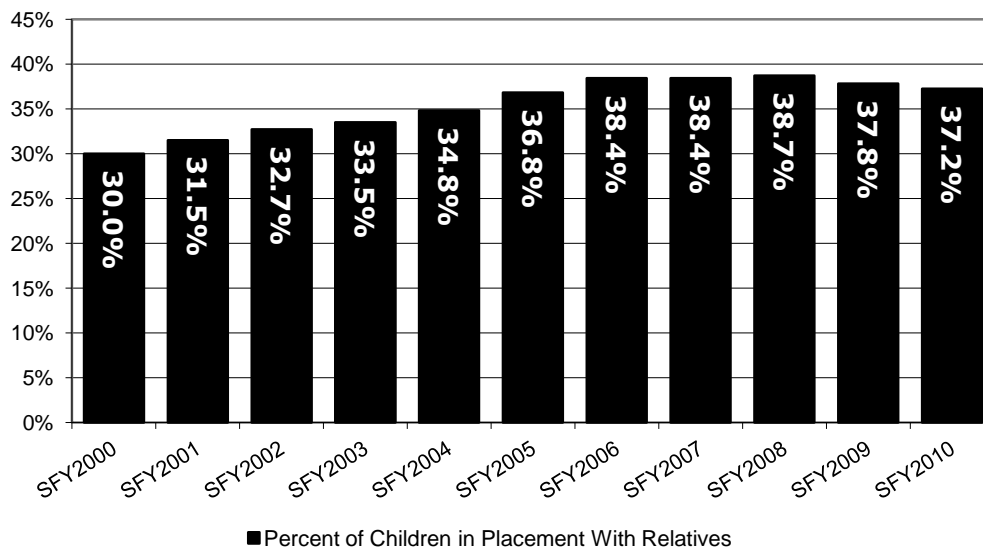
Being with kin, eating familiar food, or celebrating holidays according to their own family traditions is reassuring and comforting to children.

The Children's Administration seeks to maintain continuity of family relationships for children in out-of-home care through ongoing visitation and, when safe and in the best interest of the child, placement with a relative.

Over the course of the past nine years, the Administration has been successful in placing more children with extended family, increasing from 30 percent to more than 37 percent of children placed with family members. In State Fiscal Year 2010, 37.2 percent of children in out-of-home care were living with relatives.

In addition, the Administration has increased efforts to identify and locate suitable family members and provided increased support to relatives raising children, such as training and financial assistance.

Percentage of Children in Placement with Relatives*



* The percent of children in placement with a relative on the last day of the fiscal year. Source: FamLink for Fiscal Year 2010.